

# Fierce Grace

A story of awakening

by Rosa Lewis

## **Magic Moments**

Tears that could flood an ocean  
Laughter reaching the corners of the cosmos

When I looked into your eyes I saw Universes  
Who knew it was possible to feel like one too?

## **Introduction to Meditation**

The first time I meditated  
A young guy lit a candle  
And told us that if we stared at it long enough  
It would show us our souls  
Like the bacteria that show up  
Only under a blue light

I thought it was bullshit  
And zoned out for most of the time

It turns out I had visited new parts of myself  
And on the way back I accidentally knocked through a dam  
That had been holding back a reservoir of grief

I lay in bed and cried for four hours  
I didn't understand what had happened to me  
Or where these emotions fit  
In my understanding of who I was

I needed someone to hold me  
And tell me that these parts were welcome, too

## **The Windows to the Soul**

I had always been afraid of the intimacy  
Of looking into people's eyes

I was not ready to bare my naked soul  
When there were parts of myself that I could not bear to look at

## **Suffering**

I had no desire to look inside  
With a false hope of experiencing moments of peace  
My body was too full of unspoken history  
Awareness only shone a light on pain and misery

I started transforming myself  
When someone showed me  
That there is a way out of the suffering  
That the way out, is through  
They gave me a safe space  
To finally scream the words that had been buried for so long  
And release myself from their weight

## **We Are Not Separate**

When my dad drank himself into a stupor  
And needed rescuing, again  
I finally told him this would be the last time.  
I would not let myself drown pulling him out of the water

I carried his pain and mine  
Until he drank himself to death  
And it transmuted into one big well of grief

This is when I realised,  
we are not separate.

## **Hopeless**

There is liberation to be found  
In the worst thing happening

You can be the best possible version of yourself  
And still get fucked by life  
There are no guarantees

Sometimes we just need to show up to the shit show  
And let it all in

## **Knowing**

'You don't know'  
The patriarchy insists  
Through our laws, our science, our history

Daring to channel the unprovable  
Got you burned at the stake  
Or cut into tiny pieces  
Scattered into dusty corners

It was easier to accept  
Than open my heart.  
A miserable truth,  
The patriarchy lived in me.

Cracking through the hard-shell of resignation  
I found a predator  
Festering in the shadows  
And let it loose in full daylight

I spoke those words aloud to myself  
In disgust:  
'You don't know'  
Burning and severing  
I was afraid that I would destroy myself

But the destruction could only reach  
The part of me that was afraid of it  
Once that was gone, the predator was nothing

When the fear was destroyed  
I remembered that witches and goddesses  
Know how to rise from the ashes  
And stitch themselves back together  
And when they do, they join in the chorus:  
We know. Our hearts know.

## **Heart-Opening**

When my heart remembered that it knew

It started firing laser beams from my chest  
That were designed to cut through bullshit

And sending searchlights through my eyes  
To find people's souls

## **Intuition**

I awoke in the night  
And felt the pull of the moon.  
Peeking out my tent,  
Was not enough.

Letting go of control  
Leaning back into the will of I don't know what  
I travelled across the grass  
Knelt on the ground and prayed to the Earth.

It wasn't done with me yet.  
Taken on a journey. Stopped.  
My forehead was drawn to the floor  
At each of the points of the Compass

'I can see you'  
A predator high above me leered.  
The fear took my breath away.  
And then I laughed in its face  
And carried on circling the pond  
Before returning to my tent to sleep

## **Confidence**

'Carry yourself with the confidence  
Of a mediocre white man'

Is easier said than done  
When your opinion is valued less  
Than someone who knows half as much as you

How many times have I doubted my experience  
Because I knew they wouldn't believe me  
How many times have they dismissed my beliefs  
Because they refused to entertain  
That someone like me  
Could see what they couldn't

## **Possibility**

What if the purpose of meditation  
Is not to shut your mind up  
But to allow it to open  
Eventually exploding  
Into the place where  
It doesn't exist separately from anything else

This is the message that changed everything:  
Dare to let yourself imagine  
That enlightenment is possible for you

## **Allowing**

'I got into meditation when I read that it can  
Make you feel like you're on magic mushrooms'  
Was the first thing my partner ever said to me  
I thought it sounded cool

Ten years later he lent me a book about awakening  
That finally helped me feel ok enough in my own skin  
To sit down in stillness for 10 minutes at a time

Weird and wonderful experiences during meditation  
Were not only allowed  
But a sign that you were paying attention.  
I stopped repressing what was there  
And trying to fit into the mould

Colours and shapes appeared behind my closed eyes.  
Just the tip of my finger was so full of bizarre life,  
I stroked it along the arm of the chair  
And tears of overwhelm sprang to my eyes

## **Learning**

Renovating the house  
I was embarrassed to play the podcast  
About awakening  
While the electrician was there  
But he walked in on me painting the kitchen  
And it felt too late to turn it off

It changed the conversation between us  
We started talking about life  
And what stopped us finding peace.  
Searching for what is true  
Doesn't have to be complicated or secretive.  
Listening to relatable people  
Say what they reckon about spirituality  
Opened the door for us  
To look at things in a different way



## **Equanimity**

Even when equanimity arrived  
There was no peace in it for me  
A pointless slog  
Nothing was worth holding on to

There was some liberation:  
I no longer cared for putting on a sunny face  
When I felt grey on the inside.  
I lost interest in sex  
And the idea of getting anything done

A girl in a coffee shop  
Told me their wi-fi was broken  
And I lost my shit.  
Without resistance  
Anger was given free reign,  
Bubbling up  
Through a sea of indifference

## **Passion**

When you stop faking what makes you happy in life  
You make space for passion to start an uprising in you

## **Guided Loving Kindness**

Girls are taught to be caring  
Before all else

Which means that  
When we grow up to be women  
We will laugh at derogatory jokes  
We will swallow our hurt  
We will have sex with a man  
We've gone home with  
Rather than tell them we've changed our minds  
And risk upsetting them

When you have been made to believe  
That other people's feelings are your responsibility  
You do not need to be taught loving kindness

When you have been told the only way to protect yourself  
From the pain of being a woman in this world  
Is to perfect the art of kindness  
Then the best thing you could hear is  
'Sometimes you need to be cruel to be kind'

## **Music**

We sat in the meditation hall  
My ear drums vibrated  
And soft piano notes  
Floated into my mind

It was the violin that  
Pierced my heart  
And sliced it open  
Compassion poured out  
Into the field;  
Feeling for my brother's suffering,  
The struggles he had endured.  
Tears rolled down my face.

'Listen to what your heart has to say'  
We were invited  
'I'm tired' mine said  
So I took it to bed

## **Kundalini Energy**

Intense visualisations appeared behind my eyelids  
Tigers, buddhas, snakes  
Always only one of their eyes visible  
Through the murk  
The room started spinning  
Like I'd drunk a whole bottle of wine

Even after the bell had rung  
I stumbled up the stairs  
The room rocking from side to side  
And sat down to soup  
That I could not face  
While I felt like I was riding a ferris wheel

'Try putting your feet on the earth  
And grounding'  
Energy shot up my spine  
Every cell in my body pulsing with golden light

Who knew meditation  
Could be such a turn on?

## **Joint Enquiry**

The three of us  
Looked into each other's eyes  
I'm feeling nervous, I shared  
This broke the ice.  
Speaking the words  
That described my moment by moment experience  
I began to open up

The doors broke under the pressure  
Unstoppable laughter burst out of me  
I tried to regain composure  
Which only made it worse  
By now waves of giggles  
Were spreading through the meditation hall

'Thank fuck for that. It was all getting a bit earnest'  
A girl in my group whispered to me.

Afterwards, I thought I needed to explain myself  
'It felt like the energy inside me needed a release.  
It wanted to connect with others.'

Then I realised that real laughter  
Is the best spiritual practise there is  
It is one of the only times  
We let go and ride the wave of delight together

## **The Best Advice**

'Never let anyone tell you  
That this is not important'

## **Meditation Retreat**

Ducks sitting in a row.  
Listening thoughtfully to instructions,  
Open and soften, arrive in the moment, let go.  
How many times can one person  
Say let go in the space of a week?

Walking back and forth  
As I shed armour and melted old structures.  
'Losing the boundary between my foot and the earth  
Feels overwhelming', I shared  
'Trust', they reassured

I opened my heart and let go into it  
The space where there is nothing and everything  
Where there is no ground to catch us  
Where we fall from one moment to the next with joyful abandon

In this new state, the environment confused me  
My heart couldn't make sense of the way my mind was being treated  
I was taken out of the meditation hall  
And put on gardening duty

My heart wanted to find a way to connect  
So it picked up some gardening gloves  
And carried me into the hall, during a talk  
I waited until the end to give the teachers the gift

'You've lost your mind,' they told me.  
I thought that was the point.  
They tried to snap me out of it but I couldn't relate  
To the fear that was driving them.  
My soul had remembered that we are at home  
And exactly where we need to be  
We just need to show up and give a fuck

'You need to leave. You are having a mental health crisis.'  
Trapped in the mind's cage  
They couldn't meet me in the depths of the moment.  
I felt for their suffering and left calmly.  
Hearts are unshakeable  
When they remember to be here, now.

The rejection left a long, messy scar  
Across the masterpiece of my heart.  
May we all be free from suffering  
And the causes of suffering, it cried.

## **Reckless**

They call me reckless  
But why else are we here,  
If not to fall in love with life?

If wisdom is holding ourselves steady  
Stopping our souls from dancing with reckless abandon  
Then let me choose joy over wisdom every time

## Core Processor

I used to think that the Universe was a brain  
Trying to work something out.  
The more I thought about it,  
The more it made sense.

Processing our daily experiences  
On the cloud of our dreams.  
Solving the puzzle of life  
A series of neurons firing like 0s and 1s.

I was afraid that if I stopped thinking  
It would shut down  
Or at least this component would fail  
But I did it anyway  
More tired of a life in black and white  
Than afraid of death

Something died.  
The brain let its last spark disappear down into the abyss.  
It only took a moment for the flames to start ravaging my body  
Burning away everything I had thought was true

That tiny spark  
Had floated down to the cavern of my heart  
And landed on a bonfire  
That was laid thousands of years ago

The fire was uncontrollable  
It had been withheld for so long  
And it was hungry to reclaim what it knew belonged to her.  
The eruption scared people, it didn't compute.  
They hadn't realised yet  
That there is no truth,  
No puzzle that needs to be solved  
Just starlings. And stars.  
Dancing with an uncontrollable passion for life.



## **Loneliness**

Is there anything more powerful  
Than loneliness of the spirit?

Reaching its shadowy arm  
Down our throats to the bottom of our beings  
And beyond

Its touch turns things to dust  
Not the rich story-filled grit of the earth  
But the grey dust of death

It disintegrates stories and joy  
Into air-bourne particles  
That float away  
Homeless, loveless

## **Retreated from Society**

I walk through the fire  
And let it burn away the resistance  
I soften into the river of my soul  
And let it rip away the self  
My heart breaks  
And is flooded by the ocean of suffering

The cycle repeats  
Surely, this must be the bottom  
I cry out in agony  
Only to surface once more  
Somehow simultaneously lighter, freer  
And holding unfathomable depths of compassion

## **The Flames**

Welcomed into the flames.  
As a punishment? I wondered  
Skin was seared off  
Layer by painful layer

The wild wolf emerged.  
As a rite of passage?  
It howled and thrashed  
Trying to escape the flames.  
But that too was burned away

Only ashes remained  
And the scorched, fertile earth  
Absorbing the blood of the wolf  
And the tears of the girl.

It's a gift, I realised.  
The only gift that anyone needs.  
Don't tell them what's in the box  
I remember you saying  
Or they will never open it...

## Home

'Emotions are just visitors  
Let them come and go.'

Who resides here then?  
The lonely heart calls.

Love pops up one morning  
Only to be gone by noon.

Is it too much to ask  
For love to move in  
And make my body  
Its permanent home?

## **Rapids**

I gave up believing that I needed to be here or there  
This way or that  
Life picked me up  
And threw me down the rapids  
Doubt was gone  
But it didn't remove fear or pain or heart-ache  
It churned them up in a series of frenzied trust exercises

'Trust me!'  
The Universe demanded  
I was pulled across the rocky riverbed  
And held underwater  
While the shirt was pulled off my back

I crashed through the surface, topless  
Gasping for breath. I laughed uncontrollably  
At the joy of cool water on bare skin  
'Of course! Of course you wanted to show me this.'  
And I wonder where next..

## **The Archetypal Realm**

Sometimes it feels like the conductor of the story  
Is sticking its middle finger up at you  
It looks on and laughs  
While the organs of your soul are dragged across the desert  
'Doesn't she know? They don't actually belong to *her*'?

'Fuck you' I think  
While I fantasise about pulling off your fingernails one by one  
'Don't you know they'll grow back?'  
I'll ask, over the sound of your screams.

## **Time**

A glimpse into a different world  
Where events are peppered through time  
Jumping back and forth  
Or perhaps everything is happening at once

Time travel is an enticing myth for children  
And adults who want to relive and revive their stories  
Regrets are so compelling

Would we change it if we could?  
Deep down, at our deepest depths  
In the place where we are all connected  
This is what we want.  
For this moment, this story, to play out.

I look back and I wouldn't change it for the world.  
Or maybe I would, maybe I will.  
I sprinkle my past with forgiveness and kindness  
And just like magic  
Release myself from my present stuckness

The grains of sand drop through the hourglass,  
But they aren't collecting anywhere  
Our location is not static,  
It is the fall that is sacred.

## **Divinity**

The Universe lounged  
Basking in its own glory  
Chemicals reacting throughout its body  
It enjoyed the Samadhi.  
Sparks appeared like fireflies, bringing the void to life  
And creating a mandala of Divinity

## **Chemistry**

Separation and collision  
Cause reactions  
That bubble through space-time  
Softly tickling the cosmos

Chemistry between people is the strangest science of all.  
When couples sit near each other  
Their heartbeats fall into sync  
This is how the Universe falls in love with itself

Create an epic story of your existence; collide with life  
The Universe wants to lounge around in bed  
Having poetry read to it  
And enjoying great sex

## **The Wave and the Particle Walk into a Bar**

Creativity needs an audience, especially a joke  
One person delighting another  
By ending a story in an unexpected place

We think that the Universe is made of soulless equations  
But why else would it be possible  
To collapse the wave in an unpredictable spot  
If not to amuse the Cosmos?

## **Soul Mates**

I don't believe that soul mates  
Are restricted to romantic love  
Or that we only have one  
Or even one at a time

My soul wants to fall in love  
With as many other souls as possible  
Friends, partners, colleagues, heros  
They are all potential soul mates

Listen carefully enough to your heartbeat  
Your soul will let you know  
When it is in the company of another  
That delights it

Some people measure the success of their life  
By the amount of money or status they have amassed  
For me, the marker of success  
Is how much time my soul is hanging out  
With other souls that make it happy

## **Bargaining**

Forget everything you have conceived about enlightenment  
It will not be a graceful ascension into pure light  
If there is one thing I have learnt about waking up, it is this:  
It is usually the one thing that you don't want it to be

You don't end up a hero conquering the story  
You end up a peasant tying yourself into the messiest of knots  
While navigating the midsts of uncertainty

Occasionally you will hit upon a moment of pure bliss  
Where you suddenly realise you have been carrying a heavy weight  
That you can put down  
But mostly you will wrestle and bargain with yourself  
So afraid to let go of the one thing that you believe offers you some hope  
Or some certainty, or some reassurance that you are not a bad person

You will beat yourself to a pulp before you let go.  
You would rather die.  
And that is what you must do, let that part of you die  
So that you can be reborn  
Lighter, freer and more able to surrender to the moment



## **Building a Human**

A mess of cells  
Wrapped with neurons  
At least one part bacteria to one part human.  
Mix with plenty of water.

Each piece is sensing  
And responding, at its own rate.  
Weave channels throughout  
For hormones and impulses to travel  
To and from the extremities

Specialists gather in the centre  
A hive of activity  
That keeps things ticking along

Hearts set our intention  
Brains present us with options  
Guts make decisions  
Bodies carry out actions

Do not believe it when they say  
You are defined by your thoughts  
Our minds may be dirty  
But our hearts are pure  
And our guts know what we need to do

We are not here to get it right  
We are here to have fun and grow

## **Threads**

We weave threads of silver and gold, blindly  
Hoping to prove our worth, by dazzling someone  
With the brilliance of our creation

We snatch other's threads  
And throw them back into the crucible  
So that we can weave them exactly how we wanted

We don't realise,  
We aren't here to weave. We are the threads.  
We're here to feel the gentle joy and the brutal tug  
Of rising and falling, travelling under and over.

Let go of the illusion of control  
Feel the rub of thread against thread  
And open yourself to the satisfaction of being an inextricable part  
Of something bigger than you

## **Jealousy**

We feel like other people's shining  
Makes us look less brilliant  
What if no-one notices me next to their glow?

The truth is that their light illuminates us  
Exposing our light and sharpening our shadows.  
We are shown our extremities,  
Which we normally hide so carefully from others

We long to be a sky full of stars.  
We are drawn to the light like moths.  
We are afraid to see ourselves for what we really are;  
Soft mammals endlessly navigating  
The space that falls between the light and the dark

## Rape

The unthinkable.  
A place our mind is not allowed to go  
Never mind our words.  
But our actions,  
They go there.  
We all know someone who has been raped.  
Mother Earth, for a start.

We cordon parts of ourselves off  
In the hope that they will never be entered  
But it doesn't work like that  
Dark alleyways  
Remove accountability  
The more we resist our thoughts  
The more they remain a part of us  
Festering in closed fists  
Oozing out in ways we don't understand

Letting the light in  
Is easy when it's parts of ourselves that we love  
But what about those dark, rotting corners?  
I opened my palm  
And held what was there up to the light  
Fantasies and fears of raping and being raped  
I was afraid that letting the light touch them  
Would make them more solid  
More likely to manifest

The light seared away judgements of good versus bad  
And my heart cracked open  
Feeling for all those whose bodies have been claimed  
Force-fed powerlessness  
It poured fuel on the fire in me that knows what it doesn't want  
Dampened for so long by society's expectations of what a woman is

The paradox of grace  
Is the more we allow the darkness to surface  
The lighter it gets  
Increasing our capacity to act  
With clarity and courage

Shadows can disappear  
Thoughts can be free  
It is our actions that count  
I let myself think the unthinkable.  
My no is clearer as a result.

## Overflowing

Power grabbed, judgements formed  
She stands on the scorched earth  
Ignoring the pointless wars raging around her  
She walks amongst the soldiers not caring which side they fight for  
She sees the wounded child inside and allows the ocean of her heart to overflow

She urges them not to fight  
In a war that destroys the very thing they are trying to preserve:  
Their humanity. And their dignity.  
It only takes a moment of vulnerability  
To put down your weapons and listen

They cannot bear the thought  
So they go back to the front line.  
Most people would turn their heads away at the shit  
That oozes out of their battle wounds

She knows that the worst wounds are invisible  
Hatred, fear and shame  
Pour out in a toxic cocktail of despair  
But it doesn't stick to the kind of love she radiates

They paint her as a victim. It's a compelling image:  
Stood in ruins, blood spattered across her face.  
She is not a marketing campaign, she is a woman  
and she chooses fierce love, again and again.

Lay down your weapons  
And come and rest a while here, she invites  
If you stay long enough  
You may forget why you were fighting in the first place

## Soul Mates II

Humans have such a strong desire to classify;  
Trying to understand who we are and where we stand

We stick ourselves together like lego bricks  
Our block fits neatly onto our romantic partner's block  
We place our block into the hierarchy at work  
We build little structures with each of our friendship groups

But souls don't work like that; and neither do humans, really  
Occasionally when we feel at home with someone  
We get a glimpse into a different way of existing  
We are no longer blocks, but marbles

When we allow ourselves to show up in our fullness  
We are faced with the slightly terrifying prospect  
That we can't define each other as easily as we'd hoped  
But the sound of two marbles knocking against each other  
Is immensely satisfying, whichever way they collide

There is a charming and elusive type of relationship  
That can shift gears through the friendly, the familial, the romantic  
The conflicting, the creative and the ineffable  
Without needing to settle for too long in one place or classify itself

Being in the presence of another soul, sharing this sense of freedom  
Reminds us that we don't need to judge or define each other  
What we really need is space in which we can show up  
And allow our marbles to move, in all our different ways

This is the only way we can learn  
who we really are and what is truly important

## **Hell**

Go to Hell, but keep moving when you get there  
And you will come out the other side distilled  
Take care with whose invitation you accept  
There are different routes through the abyss.

Justice stands at the gates of Hell  
Deciding who will enter into the fire;  
An adventure of suffering,  
A punishing route to the transformed self.

Balance knows it is incalculable  
Too complicated for one person to hold.  
A group sat around a fire  
Telling the stories that help each other  
Travel their inner journey,  
That's Balance.

Hell feels different  
When you experience it this way.

## **Space**

We need space to heal  
And get in touch with our true nature

Sometimes this means physical space,  
Retreating to a meditation centre  
With no expectations on our minds or bodies,  
We can allow ourselves to settle into a state of peace

Or it could be Space  
Being reminded that we are exactly where we need to be  
In a Universe of exploding stars,  
How could we possibly feel anything other than pure wonder?

But it is so easy for humans to get stuck feeling like we are broken  
Most often the only way to see anything other than a hateful mess  
Is for another human to create space for you  
To give you their undivided presence  
And to let their heart silently communicate  
You are worthy  
You are seen  
You are welcome,  
As you are

## Things That I Believed

We are constantly trying to make sense of our experience.  
When we open our minds to new ways of looking, we can get a little lost  
Society would call it psychosis, I prefer creative thinking  
If we see ourselves like children, playing to learn about the world  
We are able to hold our beliefs lightly and laugh at how ridiculous we are  
In the spirit of humour and open-heartedness  
Here are some things that I believed:

The world was going to end  
The Universe was going to divide into six Universes,  
Headed up by six meditation teachers, connected by rainbows  
I hung out with some of my heros in my head for days at a time  
Thinking that they were meditating  
And connecting telepathically at the other end  
Men were going to be able to get pregnant  
Or a bunch of them were going to be wiped out  
Someone I admired was the internet  
Someone I loved was my destiny  
Some enlightened beings could inhabit other people's bodies  
People who voted for Brexit were going to be beamed into outer space  
There were 10 dimensional ways of experiencing the world  
I just needed to get my concentration gig sorted to get there  
I was going to have to die and, hopefully, be resurrected  
I was here to save the planet  
Enlightened people were divided into warring factions  
Who battle for power by recruiting meditators to their armies  
Irish fairies were out to trick me into making a mess of my life  
I was responsible for healing several people from afar  
And could send them dreams across the world  
The Buddha had foreseen all the impending chaos of modern society  
And four new Buddhas were here to fix it  
My heart was a garden that could hold other people's consciousness inside it  
This was somehow the key to a better future  
It was a nice place to hang apparently

Every time I woke up and realised  
That my entire belief system was bonkers  
I took one step closer to seeing that there is no true reality  
It is all just ways of looking

So much of my delusion was founded on this idea  
That we need to work out how to save the world  
I was forced to face the ridiculousness of this  
And dismantle it time and time again

I realised that we don't need clever ideas to save things  
We are here to learn to love  
Courageously and fiercely  
And that is how the collective heals

## **Sanity**

I lost my marbles for a while  
Did you find them again?  
Sort of.  
They were crushed  
And scattered through the Universe  
Like stars

## **Strength**

Don't fuck with someone who writes poetry  
They may appear soft and malleable  
While they are in front of you  
But once you have retreated  
They will unleash a power that is stronger than any person  
For the heart's knowing knows no bounds  
It can permeate the walls that men fail to scale or demolish  
It will destroy you, not with violence  
But with the unrelenting force of kindness and compassion

## **Insight**

Did you hear their hearts?  
They fall so quickly  
Into weighing it all up  
And seeing how they fair.

They will appreciate  
Your clear blue eyes  
For seeing them as they are



## Poetic License

You may think that I am being poetic when I say

I felt laser beams shoot from my heart  
I sent lightning bolts ripping across the sky  
I shot fountains of energy through my skull  
I got cats to purr using my energy body  
I learned how it is to be an entire Universe

But this was my literal experience  
Truth does not exist external to us  
It is not held in a scientific database  
It emerges from our relationships  
With the world and each other  
A human heart is capable of filling with so much magic  
You are the licenser of your own world  
Let yourself fall into the mystery  
And be amazed by life

## True Nature

The true nature of reality  
Is there is no true nature  
Every part of your experience  
Is as valid as every other part

Find the people that feed your soul  
Be fierce in the fight for wellbeing  
Open your heart and mind to change  
Tell your story bravely

This is how you become the creator  
Of a truly joyful life